

DOL/JOB CORPS'03 ALPHA LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

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RICHARD TRIGG'S REMARKS

Alpha Conference 2003

July 23, 2003

Good morning,

I want to give a special thanks to those corporations, organizations, and other staff that were invited to present workshops. This year marks a departure from our usual Alpha program. I wanted to highlight our theme "Working Together...Moving Forward" by showcasing your creative and effective work on behalf of the Job Corps students. We asked the operators to conduct many of the workshops - and to be more engaged. We charged our federal staff to look and listen for best and promising practices, to better understand the issues, to improve our system. This year's conference was intended to build, real dialogue between operators, field staff, and regional and national offices.

For all of you, who took the time to organize and present these outstanding conference workshops - and for all of you who cared enough, to actively participate and learn - a heartfelt thank you and a round of applause. When the Career Development Services System was introduced 3 years ago, I knew that constructing a new Job Corps operating model would take time.

Seeing the interactions in the workshops, and throughout the conference, I can honestly sense progress. The collective undertakings of everyone in this room have made Job Corps an even stronger, more important force for young people than ever before. CDSS is just a framework - a structure for change. The key to its success is dependent on you and your creativity.

I don't say it often, but thank you for all your hard work. Thank you for the spirit you demonstrate day in and day out, year after year. You consistently step up to the plate - despite resource challenges, rising expectations and an ever-changing population of young people, whose needs seem to be accelerating daily.

During the balance of my remarks, I will discuss key areas of interest and focus for our program as we "Work Together to Move Forward" toward yet another remarkable milestone in Job Corps' history...our 40th Anniversary.

Wow, 40 years. In this time of disposability, few things last that long. The good news to report, is that our country and this Administration recognized this achievement - and have decided rightly - that youth are a worthy investment - and that Job Corps is clearly a program with proven results. The systematic shortcomings and cosmetic efforts that plague some educational institutions, workforce and youth programs have not affected support for our program. This is not to say Job Corps is without issues or critics. There remains much work to do.

The widespread support for Job Corps reinforces the obligation and commitment we all must make to sustain our leadership position in youth development. We cannot indulge ourselves by living on past success. As we move into the fortieth year of the Job Corps program, we must avoid the temptation to look to yesterday's success as our only reason for continuing into the future.

Make no mistake, our past success is important. But we are measured by the accomplishments of today, tomorrow, and the next day. Our strengths are well known. They are the fundamental principles that guide this program.

- The absolute and unwavering commitment to the young people who entrust their futures to Job Corps.
- Our adaptability to the ever-changing demographics of our nation's youth.
- Our ability to respond to the demands of the job market and workplace; and
- Our willingness to embrace change.

These principles enable us to meet the challenges and changes confronting us each and every day.

And speaking of change...some of you remember the early days of Job Corps... The 60's when...

Civil rights took root and President Johnson declared a war on poverty by signing The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

Job Corps was created and the first center opened in Ca-toc-tin, Maryland on January 14, 1965- serving just 30 students!

A week later, the Camp Kilmer Job Corps Center opened in New Jersey.

The 60s were indeed turbulent times for Job Corps, with much experimentation and also significant setbacks - including the 1969 announcement to close 59 centers.

And what about the 70s....

When the Tongue Point center on the Oregon coast became the first Job Corps center to go co-ed! And the Atlanta Job Corps paved the way for the first on-site daycare center.

Despite the unrest of Vietnam, the 70's ended on a high note for the program...That's when we experienced a nationwide expansion...almost doubling the program's size from 59 to 99 Job Corps centers.

I remember the 80s, ...and hearing the results from the first Policy Research study. This 1982 landmark longitudinal study provided new evidence about the validity of Job Corps - including the often-cited statistic

" For every dollar spent on Job Corps, \$1.46 is returned to society".

That was good news for our program - but it didn't keep us from having critics.

Many of you will remember an all out effort to shut down the program entirely.

But the 80's are also remembered as a renaissance of program innovation and growth - where many new and innovated programs were instituted.

Programs such as, the Student Pay and Management Information System (SPAMIS), and the performance management system were developed.

Many of these core components remain an integral part of today's operation.

In the 90s I remember organizations committed to the launching of the 50-50 plan which called for "improving existing services, opening new Job Corps centers, while providing more training for more youth."

The plan received unprecedented support from Congress, funds flowed and program enhancements along with the addition of 12 new centers were opened.

By the end of the decade, Job Corps was serving more than 60,000 youth annually.

My "walk through the decades," demonstrates
How, we have changed,
How, fluid we've been and;
How, we have shifted with time - all while huge demographic, economic and political challenges swept across our country.

Today, everyone understands that after 9/11, tactical adjustments to U.S. policies and priorities have been made. This reality presents itself at a time when we know, the sobering truth about poverty rates being far too high among young people..... particularly minority youth. When we know that education is poorly delivered in too many urban schools; and When we know that far too many young immigrants cannot speak the English language. The contribution that these youth would make to our nation's security and economy, if their lives were changed - is immeasurable.

That is where Job Corps steps in. We have adapted to meet the needs of a more diverse student population. Today, on centers, you are just as likely to hear Spanish, as you are English, Creole, Chinese, Navajo or Sudanese.

In my tenure as National Director of Job Corps, I have worked with you to build on a program that is dynamic, not static. To remain relevant as a national program, we must always be forward looking and anticipating the future. We must be willing to let go of the programs and systems that are no longer responsive, and embrace new methods, new ideas, and new approaches. We must continue to think of ways to improve productivity and minimize costs just like the private sector.

This is not new thinking. Many of the contractors here today have operations beyond Job Corps. You know that quality; productivity and efficiency determine the winners from the losers in the marketplace. Leaders innovate. They are constantly on the lookout for ways to streamline the process, to improve efficiency.... all with an eye toward maintaining a quality product. Yet...these are not challenges for contractors alone. These same challenges face federal staff as well.

For example, our federal system is currently undergoing major change. We are re-organizing and seeking ways to streamline and economize - through competition, through the integration

of services and the combining of field offices.

This change will have an impact on how we do business.

While it is the national Job Corps structure that provides uniformity and consistency through national policy direction; it will be through the forming of new business relationships and how well we adjust to the various regional interpretations and managing viewpoints that will key our success.

These organizational and financial challenges are not unique to Job Corps. Virtually every federal agency and private business is in the same boat. While, we are not sinking, we must work even harder to stay afloat, to successfully negotiate the economic and political currents. Fiscal vigilance and program integrity will enable us to steer through the turbulence and stay on course.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a global economy. The business world has come to understand that you must be innovative, creative and efficient in order to compete successfully in the marketplace. The American public looks to government to operate by the same principles. In response, the government calls for a higher level of accountability and results, directly linking program performance to budgets. But with Job Corps, it is even more critical.

Accountability by the numbers is less important to me than our accountability for lives. When we say we have achieved a 90 percent placement rate, we must be able to demonstrate that these are relevant jobs with real futures for our young people. When we say - we are strong community neighbors; we must show the active and enthusiastic support of our business, civic, and community partners.

The bottom line is that we need to work together and learn from each other as never before, taking the very best ideas and using them to better serve our students. We must not be afraid to set aside tradition and habit. And we cannot be afraid to embrace change.

As we enter the new millennium and our 40th Anniversary, I am confident that Job Corps will continue to rise to the challenge of adapting its strategies - to overcome barriers and meet the changes of our environment. The wealth of talent and energy - represented in this room, and

throughout our system can make a huge difference when applied to the nation's needs.

Our job is not to accept disrespectful attitudes or lackluster performance, but rather to engage and energize a system to better prepare youth for the future.

To this end...Let me ask two questions?

- What do I see as our areas of concentration for the new millennium?
- And what role does Job Corps play within the Administration's challenges to the workforce investment system?

Let me speak to that last question first.

Assistant Secretary Emily DeRocco has consistently stressed four practical changes to the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

1. Create a more effective governance structure by streamlining program administration to provide flexibility.
 2. Strengthen the One-Stop system.
 3. Target WIA youth funds to out-of-school youth.
- And;
4. Provide common, simplified performance measures for all education and training programs.

Even without a change to WIA, I believe Job Corps can justifiably meet every challenge Assistant Secretary DeRocco has cited. Let me share why this is true.

Our governance structure is lean and efficient. Through national oversight, standard operating procedures and clear performance expectations, there is little room for confusion or excuses. Job Corps' administration of its now 118, and soon to be 124 campuses, is still the premier example of public-private partnership in the workforce investment system. The One-Stop system is becoming a source of new recruits for centers as well as a source of needed information for graduates. Job Corps will work to support and expand these opportunities as the One-Stop centers continue to evolve.

Unquestionably, Job Corps' focus is - and always has been - on out-of-school youth. Whether we help a high school graduate who can't find his or her way, or we provide skills to a scared young immigrant who has no place to turn. Job Corps has an outstanding record in creating successful outcomes for out-of-school youth. Once again, Job Corps is a leader. You can argue that our measures may not always be simple, but they are what they are...a core set of expectations by which we measure program performance and students' progress.

As we review our past and plan for our future, what will the history books say about Job Corps? A decade characterized by the globalization of our economy, and the unprecedented use of the Internet...a decade that started with our country declaring war on terrorism coupled with a suffering economy. But, as with the decades that went before us, we must still exist within the context of the present reality. We must continue to plan for the future.

As we approach 40, what goals and objectives do we need to set into place to prepare the Job Corps program for the next 40 years? More importantly, what actions can we take today to broaden the foundation of our program and consequently its support? Let me share with you my goals. Goals that are certainly obtainable. By looking forward and working together we can achieve:

1. English proficiency for each and every Job Corps student...whether they are Somali, Asian, or Hispanic.
2. National High School Diploma Granting Authority - resulting in record numbers of Job Corps graduates proudly carrying a legitimate high school diploma.
3. Relevant jobs with livable wages, good benefits and career advancement opportunities for all of our graduates.
4. An ongoing review and update of our vocational curricula, resulting in broad acceptance from the business and employer community.
5. Technological break-throughs in both the administration and management of our programs creating maximum efficiencies and cost-savings.
6. An active and contributing Alumni Association that is universally supported by our stakeholders in Job Corps. An alumni that is reflective of our pride and program diversity.
7. Active participation in community service. This is how they learn that giving back is a worthwhile lifetime commitment.

Finally, and perhaps most important;

8. A pledge to keep our program's integrity, accountability, and reputation intact - for without this, little else matters.

Ladies and gentlemen, if we keep our focus on these manageable objectives, there is no doubt in my mind that Job Corps' 40th anniversary will be both a celebration of four decades of success, and a starting point for a new era of achievement for our program in the years ahead.

You have earned this moment!

A year from now, we will "officially" kick off this milestone celebration starting with the 2004 Alpha "Anniversary" Conference.

If any of you have toured the National Archives, you would have seen a statue by the front door with a quote from Shakespeare that says, what is past is prologue.

I am reminded of the old story about the tourist who was riding in a cab and happened to notice the sculpture and inscription. He asked the cab driver what the words meant. The cab driver replied - "it means you ain't seen nothing' yet!"

Ladies and gentlemen, on that note, I wish you a good afternoon with productive conversations, and of course, a fantastic evening tonight at the National Job Corps Association's signature event, the 8th Annual Alpha Awards!

Thank you.

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